The Cult of Agreeableness

Personality’s Influence on the Advocacy Efforts of Political Appointees

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Introduction

Why Study Appointees and Advocacy

This project studies the correlations between agreeableness and advocacy efforts of political appointees. Commissions for which they serve rely on advocacy to secure support for organizational services. Appointees in this study volunteer to serve, a prosocial value (i.e., need to help others) that increases the likelihood that they are highly agreeable.

Why Agreeableness Matters

Agreeableness as it relates to advocacy efforts

Survey Part 1—Personality Inventory

36 appointees who serve in Texas completed the Big Five Inventory* ranking statements such as:

- I am someone who is talkative
- I am someone who is reserved

Each appointee ranked 44 statements using:

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

Rankings determine where individuals fall within each personality dimension (i.e., trait).

Survey Part 2—Advocacy Efforts

Appointees were given a list of advocacy activities that included actions like:

- Shared information with the public, via newsletters, journals, books, etc.
- Had face-to-face discussions with federal legislators in support of your organizational mission

Appointees indicated involvement by checking the box next to the action. Tables at right show the most and least popular activities among appointees.

Advocacy Activity Results

Numbers below indicate the number of appointees who pursue advocacy activity listed.

- High and low ranking advocacy activities
- Total activity

Advocating is hard

Research Methods & Results

Personality Inventory Results

Each appointee ranked 44 statements using:

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

Advocacy as it relates to political appointees

- Research showed that political appointees within this study are highly agreeable, which is a common trait among volunteers who contribute to prosocial values (i.e., the need to help others.)

Conclusions

Agreeableness as it relates to political appointees

- Research showed that political appointees within this study are highly agreeable, which is a common trait among volunteers who contribute to prosocial values (i.e., the need to help others.)

Agreeableness as it relates to advocacy efforts

- Research data showed that openness and extraversion, not agreeableness, are the more significant contributors to active advocacy behavior within this appointee pool.

Recommendations for political appointees

- As with most things, agreeableness should be in balance. Appointees must be able to support ideas that contribute to a mission and question those that do not.

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Further information

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Literature Cited


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